

BODY SNATCHERS

By David E. Williams

BODY SNATCHERS

DIRECTED BY

ABEL FERRARA

WRITTEN BY

STUART GORDON &

DENNIS PAOLI AND

NICHOLAS ST. JOHN

RUNNING TIME:

90 MINUTES

WARNER BROS.

GENRE: ALIEN

INVASION

PLOT: ET LIMA BEANS

ARRIVE ON EARTH AND

BEGIN DUPLICATING PEOPLE—BUT ONE TEENAGE

GIRL WON'T GIVE IN.

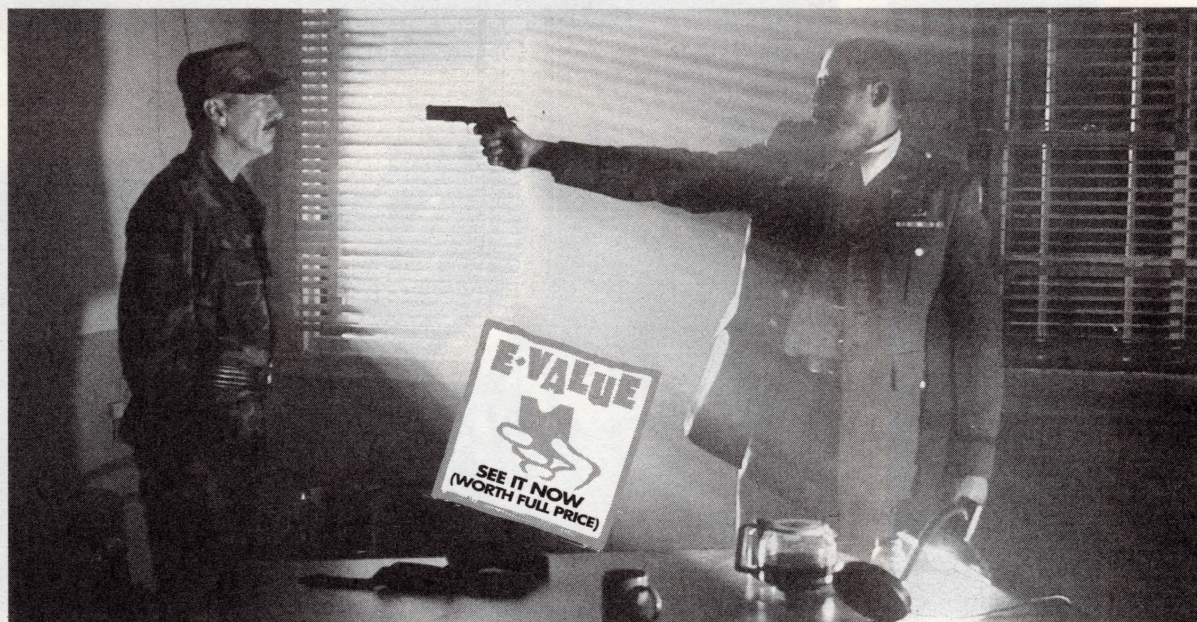
CAST: GABRIELLE

ANWAR, TERRY KINNEY,

REILLY MURPHY, MEG

TILLY AND FOREST

WHITAKER



There's nothing more heartbreaking than a missed opportunity, but a missed attempt at greatness comes close, as in the mysterious case of director Abel (*Driller Killer*, *King of New York*) Ferrara's *Body Snatchers*, a long-anticipated, nearly lost and ultimately enjoyable take on Jack Finney's classic premise. However, while rabid devotees of Don Siegel's metaphoric 1956 original or Phillip Kaufman's 1978 mindfuck remake may decry Ferrara's effort as a limp addition to the Vegetable Matter Alien Impostor Planetary Takeover sub-sub-sub-genre, they tend to attack the film for what it *isn't* as opposed to what it *is*—an irony lost on most.

Set in the lush South, *Body Snatchers* quickly establishes its own creepy-crawly structure as postpubescent Marti Malone (Gabrielle Anwar) and her family make a pit stop on their way to a remote military installation where her father (Terry Kinney) has been ordered to conduct EPA tests at the base's hazardous-waste facility. Entering the dank recess that passes for a restroom, Marti encounters a freaked-out soldier who frantically warns her of "them" and "sleep" before escaping into the bush. To Siegel/Kaufman disciples, this is a blatant, unforgivable giveaway that sacrifices any possible suspense. Sure it is, if you can define those two words respectively as "malevolent alien seed pods bent on global domination" and "the process during which rootlike tendrils envelope your body, decode your essence and steal your soul." But most people can't, frankly, because the Siegel/Kaufman films don't enjoy the kind of pop culture status necessary for such—at least not outside the demographic for a publication such as

this. So, for regular humans, the scene is instead a shocking and plausible device by which Marti comes in initial contact with her sprouting antagonists.

For viewers willing to ignore these misconceptions, *Snatchers* is a stand-up thriller that boasts a superior performance from Anwar, richly atmospheric cinematography—always lingering between dusk and dawn—restrained use of goopy special effects and sure-handed freakishness from Ferrara. Highlights include a kindergarten fingerpainting session that produces a dozen identically smeary designs and single dissenting image from the group's lone human, Anwar's dilemma in determining her father's true nature before making her decision with hot lead and, finally, the high-flying ejection of her baby brother from the escape chopper.



Dave

THE FINAL CUT

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OVERALL

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